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NEWS RELEASE

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Energy Efficiency Can Reduce Home Heating Costs *PSC offers tips for cutting consumption during bitter cold weather*

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Jan. 7, 2014) – With a blast of Arctic air covering the state, the Kentucky Public Service Commission (PSC) says consumers can limit the impact on their home heating bills by taking steps to reduce energy consumption.

“As temperatures plummet, energy usage and home heating bills inevitably rise,” PSC Chairman David Armstrong said. “But a few simple steps can help limit the effect.”

Since weather – not price - is the dominant factor in determining energy usage, the best weapon consumers have to manage their energy costs is to take steps to reduce consumption, he said. Those measures can be as simple as turning down the thermostat a few degrees, Armstrong said.

“It’s also never too late to seal leaks around windows, door and other openings, to cover windows with plastic sheeting, and to take other low-cost steps to keep cold air out and warm air in,” Armstrong said.

Armstrong also emphasized that programs are available to help consumers who may be struggling to pay their heating bill. Heating assistance is available from local community action agencies and from utility companies, but funds are limited and sometimes run out during the heating season, he said.

“Do not allow a difficulty in paying a utility bill to become a crisis,” Armstrong said. “Now is the time to take the necessary steps if you think that you may need assistance in paying your heating bill this winter.”

The PSC is an independent agency attached for administrative purposes to the Energy and Environment Cabinet. It regulates more than 1,500 gas, water, sewer, electric and telecommunication utilities operating in Kentucky and has approximately 90 employees.

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Information for consumers

Kentucky consumers can take a number of steps to reduce energy usage or to soften the impact of heating costs. They include:

Budget billing: This option allows customers to pay the same amount each month, based on their average monthly usage during the year. Customers should contact their utility for more information.

Energy conservation measures: Simple steps such as turning down thermostats on furnaces (most people are comfortable at 68 degrees) and water heaters (120 degrees is hot enough for nearly all uses) can be big energy savers.

Energy audits: Many local utilities offer home energy audits at little or no cost to consumers. These audits can identify energy-wasting trouble spots and provide information on how to correct the problems. Utilities often include a package of energy-saving devices with an audit.

Weatherization: Consumers can do a number of things to reduce inflows of cold air and leakage of warm air, particularly around windows and doors. Some basic weatherization steps include:

- Use caulk or weatherstripping to seal cracks around windows, doors, pipes, electric outlets on exterior walls, and other points where cold air can enter the home. This alone can reduce heating costs by 10 percent or more.
- Install energy-efficient doors and windows.
- Add insulation in attics, crawl spaces and walls.
- Cover windows, especially those with single-pane glass, with storm windows or plastic sheeting.
- Clean or replace furnace filters monthly to improve airflow and efficiency.

Advice on conserving energy, including links to a wide range of information, also is available from the Kentucky Department for Energy Development and Independence on the Web at: <http://energy.ky.gov/efficiency/>.

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Weatherization assistance for low-income families is available in Kentucky. Many utilities offer weatherization assistance in conjunction with local social service agencies. Local social service agencies also offer assistance through a state program administered by the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services. For information on weatherization assistance, go to:

<http://www.communityactionky.org/weatherization.html>

Low-income consumers may qualify for assistance with their heating bills through the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). It is administered at the local level by community action agencies. Consumers who do not qualify for LIHEAP may be eligible for assistance through programs sponsored by their utility company or programs operated by local social service organizations. Consumers should contact their utility for more information. Information about LIHEAP is available on the Web at:

<http://chfs.ky.gov/dcbs/dfs/LIHEAP.htm>

For general information about cutting heating costs, utility issues or for assistance with resolving consumer disputes with utilities, contact the PSC by calling 800-772-4636 or go to the PSC Web site at:

<http://psc.ky.gov>

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